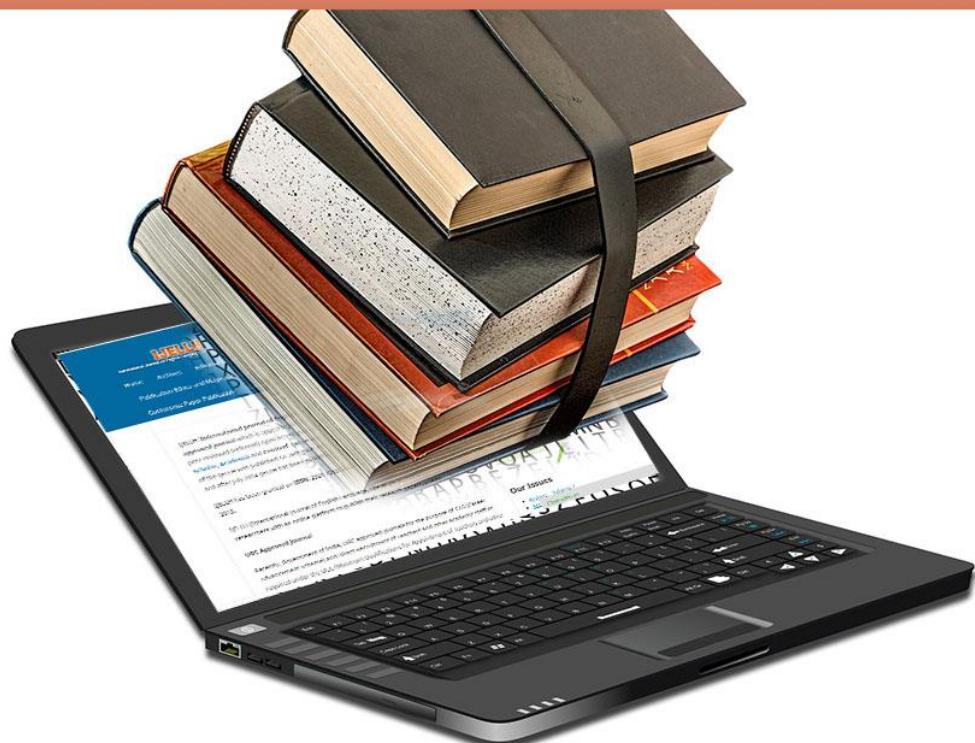


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Gamification of English Teaching and Learning

Abstract

Language is our primary source of communication. It is the method through which we share our ideas and thoughts with others. David Crystal in his book; 'English as a Global language' (1997) says: "A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." Earlier many learners struggled with traditional methods of learning English such as grammar translation method, which needed them to study the English language for years before using it in real life. It was challenging for learners, who were busy with work, or were less academically gifted, or could not devote years to learning the language before being able to use the language. Educators realized that to motivate these learners, they need an approach that emphasizes on the communicative ability of learners. Thus, came the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT).

Gamification is one of the Communicative Language Teaching Approaches.

Games are a fun and motivating way to practise and learn a language. Games give an opportunity to communicate in English in an interesting manner. This paper deals with the gamification of English teaching and learning. It briefly sheds light on the current status of the teaching and learning process of English in schools, and some of the problems teachers face while teaching English in the traditional method. The paper highlights the importance of games in the teaching of English and has proposed different strategies by which games can be incorporated in the process of English teaching and learning. It suggests five new language games which may facilitate the process of learning English, making it interesting and effective.

Keywords: Gamification, Interesting, Effective, Communicative Ability

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, teaching English has become a global phenomenon. Nowadays, a lot of emphasis is laid on teaching English to young learners. English is taught as a main subject in kindergarten and elementary schools. It has been observed that children get bored easily if the teacher is teaching them English, using the traditional methods and techniques of teaching. It is the responsibility of the teachers to find out innovative, interesting and attractive ways to teach English and motivate their student to learn English language. Lee Su Kim has stated;

There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature, and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games (Kim 35).

Students should develop their L1 competence before they begin learning another language. Teaching a foreign language to children needs to have a completely different mode and form than a regular language instruction at secondary school. Developing appropriate conditions for teaching is based on implementing the elements of second language into a number of games and entertainment-oriented activities in which learners participate with enthusiasm. Teaching young learners is very difficult when compared to teaching teenagers or adults, because young learners get distracted easily. Children love fun and play, so teachers should choose appropriate teaching methods that are compatible with the nature of children.

Games are interesting methods to teach vocabulary to young learners. Games help learners in learning vocabulary effectively, without boredom and they are able to acquire the lessons easily. Games can be a really motivating way to learn a language. Games are also effective tools for learners who are shy or worried about making mistakes. It can encourage them by giving an opportunity to communicate in English without any inhibition. Games are the best methods that could be used to avoid monotony in the classroom. They play a special role in any foreign language teaching. Both learners and teachers will benefit from the inclusion of games in classroom teaching. Furthermore, teachers may be able to achieve their educational objectives and outcomes through the application of games, especially while teaching vocabulary.

Vocabulary is the backbone and the key element to learn any language. Teaching vocabulary through the use of games has become crucially important for English language learners because they sustain enjoyment and interest in learning. Vocabulary games also

encourage using the language in a fearless and creative manner which facilitates in the long-term retention of the vocabulary.

Children need to speak out loud, fluidly and confidently. Playing ESL games help people to communicate. Language games give learners plenty of opportunity to practise speaking, without neglecting spelling, reading and writing. ESL games allow learners to stretch their capabilities and test the children constantly. These games help learners reach new levels of performance in an encouraging and stimulating environment.

ESL games exhilarate and motivate learners to new levels. If they do not pay attention during the presentation of new language, and make a mental effort to memorise it, they will not be able to play the games well, and they will let their team and themselves down, so they make more effort to join in and learn as much as possible. ESL games help learners to revise a massive amount of vocabulary and grammar in a few minutes. ESL games help in making a stimulated environment where the learners are active and focused. Children naturally have a lot of energy and are not good at sitting for long periods. Therefore, if the teacher includes a game with movement from time to time, he can prevent them from becoming passive in the classroom. Games create an interactive energy that helps an individual grow interest in a subject and improves concentration.

Teachers can improve the effectiveness of their teaching by creating a positive learning environment and give their students a real chance to speak the language while engaging them in the class at the same time. Games enable teachers to handle successfully, students of different calibre in the class. Games help pupils gain more self-esteem which later help them to succeed in all areas of life. Moreover applying games in a class has pedagogical applications for students, teachers and text book developers. Teachers can use game as “teaching device”. They find game as an interesting activity to attract students to the learning process. Often teachers feel that using games for teaching vocabulary may waste a lot of time, but that is not true. On

the contrary, both students and teachers benefit from language games. When students don't feel the pressure of learning through language games, teachers find it easier to teach new vocabulary to the students using language games. Students feel comfortable while communicating with their peers. This helps in developing a sound competition among them. Finally, text book developers can select and integrate various types of the games in the syllabus of the course books.

Learners of secondary school levels have limited attention spans, so the teacher needs to set the mood of the class, and switch games if necessary. A teacher can control the mood of the class to get maximum learning throughout the session. Teachers do not need many materials to play classroom games. The teacher must be prepared beforehand with one or two different paced games so that he can switch the games easily. Teachers need to design games in such a way that the classes become interactive, enjoyable and productive.

Language learning is a hard task. Well chosen games give students a break and at the same time, allow students to practise language skills. Games can motivate children since they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Moreover, games employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts. Games also encourage and increase cooperation among learners and help them practice different language skills, thus enhancing their communication skills.

Lee Su Kim discussed a number of advantages of using games in the classroom. He said that games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class and they are also motivating and challenging. Learning a language requires a great deal of effort; games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning. They provide language practice in the various skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Finally, games encourage learners to interact and communicate and create a meaningful context for language use.

Tyson in his book, *How to choose games*, mentioned that a game should not only provide enjoyment, but should involve "friendly" competition. It should be capable of keeping

all the students involved and interested. It should encourage students to focus on the use of language rather than on the language itself and lastly a game needs to give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material.

Language games have numerous advantages. They lower affective filter, encourage creative and spontaneous use of language, promote communicative competence, motivate students and focus on the use of correct grammar in communication. Games need to be student centered where the teacher acts only as facilitator. They build class cohesion, help the whole class to participate and promote healthy competition. Games should be designed to suit the age, level, and interests of students.

2. Literature Reviews

1. Advantages of Using Language Games in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Sudan Basic Schools

A study on the *Advantages of Using Language Games in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Sudan Basic Schools* by Dr. Abdelrazig Ibrahim, aimed at investigating the advantages of utilizing language games in teaching English as a foreign language in Sudan Basic Schools. The problem was documented through the researcher's long experience in teaching English as a foreign language, exam results, data analysis and consultation of other English teachers. The study adopted a quasi-empirical method. The sample of the study consisted of thirty English teachers in East Gezira Locality. The population of the study was all English teachers in the second period in the academic year 2017-2018. A questionnaire was constructed to collect the data. The study used SPSS program to analyse the data. The results revealed that teaching language games are useful to EFL learners. Language games can help students in building a good relationship with the new language.

2. The Use of Games in Teaching English at Sman 2 Pare

A research on *The Use of Games in Teaching English at Sman 2 Pare* by Lusi Dyah

Ayu and Muridbjono described the use of games in teaching English at Sman 2 Pare. The data were obtained through interview, guide, observation sheets and questionnaires. The findings showed that there were five games used by the teacher, there were several problems faced by the teacher while conducting the games and almost all of the students gave positive responses toward the use of games in teaching English.

3. The Importance of Using Games in EFL Classrooms

A study on *The Importance of Using Games in EFL Classrooms* by Emine Gozcu and Cagda Kivanc Caganaga discusses the importance and effectiveness of using games in EFL classrooms. It was a case study in which two undergraduate students are taught English by using the game called 'Twister' which was adapted for teaching. The study sample consisted of people who were between twenty to twenty-five years old and lived in Leftke. It was determined from the data that games should be employed in second language learning classrooms in terms of providing atmosphere for EFL learners in which there are fun, motivation and high learning performance.

4. The Effect of Games and Simulations on Higher Education: A Systemic Literature Review

A study on *The Effect of Games and Simulations on Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review* by Dimitrios Vlachopoulos and Agoritsa Makri discusses the impact of games and simulations with regard to achieving specific learning objectives. The results indicated that games and simulations have a positive impact on learning goals. The researchers identified three learning outcomes when integrating games into the learning process: cognitive, behavioural, and affective. As a final step, the authors consolidated evidences for the benefit of academics and practitioners in higher education who were interested in the efficient use of games and simulations for pedagogical purposes.

5. Games in the Teaching of English

A study on *Games in the Teaching of English* by Blanka Frydrychova Kimova describes different ways of using games in language classrooms. It gives a description of game, the different classifications of game and the benefits of using games in English teaching. In conclusion, the author provides a list of tried and tested books and websites for ready-made games.

3. Methodology

A. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Learning English allows us to communicate with new people. It helps us in getting a deeper understanding of another culture. The traditional methods for learning English have not been so successful and students as well as teachers are exhausted of the traditional methods of teaching words to students. Learners tend to be autonomous in their learning and they want to have control of their learning.

Thus this study tried to help access better ways of learning. One way is reinforcing vocabulary through games which helps learners to use English language in different contexts. By using language games students can learn English in a creative manner.

The study wanted to explore why game-like activities are superior to traditional non-communicative activities in the teaching and learning process of English. This study attempted to figure out the best ways to teach English to students.

Therefore, the present study aims to answer the following research question:

Do games help in developing English proficiency among students in ELT class?

B. Participants

The participants would be taken from two ICSE and two CBSE board schools. The study would focus on students from class VI and class IX. Ten students would be taken from each class. So a total of forty students would be taken from ICSE schools and a total of forty students would be taken from CBSE schools. Altogether, a sample size of eighty students would be taken.

C. Instrumentations

There would be five vocabulary games which would be introduced to the students. These games would be new and had never been introduced before. The games would be *Word Circle, Chameleon Platter, Acronym Thread, Double Nature Names, and Bucket List*.

In the language game “Word Circle”, the teacher divides the entire class into two groups. The teacher asks each group of students to stand in a circle. Then the teacher shows each group a card with a word written on it. Of the two groups, the teacher instructs one group to give the synonyms of the word, whereas she instructs the other group to give the antonyms of the word. The students of each group needs to make sure that none of the words, whether synonyms or antonyms are repeated. The teacher can set a limit of the number of synonyms and antonyms to be said. Then the teacher would ask the two groups to frame sentences with the synonyms and antonyms given. For example, a student from the synonym group would be asked to frame sentence with an antonym given, and a student from the antonym group would be asked to frame sentences with a synonym given.

In the language game “Chameleon Platter”, the teacher divides the students into several groups. Each group of students is given a card where a cluster of sentences are written with a blank in each sentence. Below the sentences a word is given with its different forms. The students need to identify the appropriate form of the word to fill in the blank. The teacher would then ask the students to use the word forms and make new sentences of their own.

In the language game “Acronym Thread”, the teacher divides the students into several groups. Each group of students has been given a card with five words written on it. The students in each group need to arrange the words in such a way, that an acronym is formed. Then the teacher would ask each group of students to come to the board and write the letters of the acronym in a jumbled manner on the board. The class needs to set the letters in the proper sequence to guess the right acronym. The students from the class would then need to frame sentences with the acronym they have formed.

In the language game “Double Nature Names”, the students need to identify such words which may be names of natural objects, and which also has another meaning, besides being the name of a natural object. For example, rock occurs in nature and it can also refer to a rock band. The teacher can present certain clues to the students which will help them to guess the names. The students then need to frame sentences with both the meanings of the words given.

In the language game “Bucket List”, the students are divided into groups. Each group is shown a picture. The students in each group have to find out words to describe the picture, or words to describe their thoughts when they first see the picture. They need to write down the words in pieces of paper which would be put in buckets. The teacher would then take the buckets around the students, when each group picks up the words and tries to frame sentences with them.

D. Procedure

At first, the selected students were randomly divided into control group and experimental group. The control group were asked to learn words from a text alongwith their meanings. The experimental group were taught words with the help of vocabulary games. In the pre-test when the students were observed, it was seen that students were finding difficulty to learn the vocabulary and recall them. However, in the post-test it was observed that students

who were taught using vocabulary games improved their vocabulary and were able to retain the words for a longer period of time.

4. Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that students who are taught a foreign language using vocabulary games would retain the words taught for a longer period of time than those students who are taught using traditional conventional methods.

5. Discussion

Social interaction in game-like activities provides the students with opportunities to get help and support, allow them to participate in authentic communication, helps them to cooperate with each other, increase their self-esteem, and provide them with an opportunity to interact with their peers.

During this study, it was observed that while students were interacting with each other in a vocabulary game, they all had a common goal, i.e. finding the new word and defeating the other group. In fact they are unconsciously motivated towards cooperating and consulting with each other, to win against the other group. Even weak students were engaged in the activity because there is no need to be afraid of grades and the teacher just monitored students and announced the winners and losers. Students' attempts in finding the correct answer in a vocabulary game engaged them in a social interaction. While interacting in vocabulary game-like activities, students did not feel the pressure of being observed so their ability to learn and recall vocabulary items was increased. Students of the groups tried to discover the unknown vocabulary items by negotiating with each other. This automatically increased students' cooperation.

Many students learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process where they enjoy the strategies used for teaching. In learning vocabulary through language games, peers have opportunities to pursue a common goal, which is finding the exact vocabulary item that is merely known by one student who helps his or her peers when they are at the zone of proximal development. People in a group may have different ideas about the entity of the intended word but they scaffold each other and reach a consensus through discussion.

All the above mentioned points imply that games are beneficial in language learning, while traditional classroom activities mostly emphasized on learning the rules of grammar. Teachers believe that learning the grammar is learning the language. However in communicative approaches such as using games, the emphasis is on the meaning and students feel free to interact.

Most of the traditional classroom activities follow drill and practice method which emphasizes accuracy and consumes a lot of time. However, language games develop communication skills which stress fluency.

The teacher governing the traditional classroom activities corrects students' mistakes but vocabulary games are based on the communicative approach which is based on the ideology that students should communicate with each other. When students are able to communicate, their mistakes are corrected automatically.

Finally in a traditional classroom, teachers are the sole knowledgeable people who decide what and how activities should be done in class, ignoring students' capabilities, interests, needs, etc. However, in communicative- based classes, teachers just monitor the class without letting students spoil the class. A good teacher involves students in class, caring for their needs, interests, etc. and students are comfortably drawn to the learning process.

6. Conclusion

The choice of game-based activity plays an important role in improving vocabulary. Every group of learners is unique, and teachers should use appropriate activities to teach them. The teachers should make sure that the learners are able to play the game chosen. It is recommended to teacher to choose a game in which as many children as possible can take part. It is essential that teacher takes care that all the learners are engaged sufficiently as active participants of the game.

It is a good idea to conduct a survey after games and learn about preferences of each group. Additionally, teachers can make use of it in favour of learners because it may help them in planning lessons. Not every game appeals to every learner, therefore, the teachers should have a sound repertoire of games at their disposal. It is recommended neither to play a game so long, nor to play the same game too frequently. Moreover, games make language classes more attractive and relaxing.

Another issue to keep in mind is that the relationship between the effectiveness of teaching and the level to which learners considered a given game entertaining. The teachers should combine preferences of groups and effectiveness of teaching. Young learners are very susceptible to the atmosphere of lessons and become disappointed and discouraged very easily. The teacher's task is to create friendly conditions in which children actively engages in the learning process.

According to Lee Su Kim, there are many advantages of using games in the classroom. Games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class. They are motivating and challenging. Games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning. They provide language practice in the various skills- speaking, writing, listening and reading. Games encourage students to interact and communicate and create a meaningful context for language use.

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